Share Your Railroad’s Success with an ASLRRRA Business Development Award Nomination, Due Friday

Building a business in the short line railroad industry requires innovative thinking, flexibility and a strong work ethic. That is why ASLRRRA is eager to recognize members whose savvy decision making in the past year led to notable development and growth.

The ASLRRRA Business Development Awards recognize the Class II and III railroads that have designed and enacted the most innovative and successful business-building initiatives in the small railroad industry. Last year’s winners, Delaware-Lackawanna Railroad Company, Texas & New Mexico Railway and Lake State Railway, each took advantage of unique opportunities to expand their businesses and attract new customers.

Delaware-Lackawanna had grown its carload volume by 510 percent by the end of 2019 since being founded in 1993, through a commitment to customer service and an effort to court businesses with no previous rail service. Both Texas & New Mexico Railway and Lake State Railway identified and took advantage of service gaps, Texas & New Mexico by moving thousands of carloads of outbound crude oil that exceeded pipeline capacity, and Lake State by figuring out how to bring 40,000 tons of logs to keep workers in business at a Weyerhaeuser facility in West Virginia.

These railroads’ success stories are not the only ones in the short line industry, and ASLRRRA wants to recognize others. Nominations for ASLRRRA’s Business Development Awards are due this Friday, Feb. 14. Click here to learn about award criteria and how to nominate a railroad. Please contact Amy Krouse at akrouse@aslrrra.org with any questions.

Railway Age Magazine Names its Top 10 Under 40, Including Some ASLRRRA Member Employees

Employees at four ASLRRRA railroad and supplier member companies have been named Railway Age magazine’s 10 Under 40 honorees. The winners are considered up-and-coming leaders in the railroad industry.

ASLRRRA congratulates Jake Harrison, general manager at Genesee & Wyoming subsidiary California Northern Railroad Company; Tim Lesniak, roadmaster at New York & Atlantic Railway; Travis Rollings, director of office systems at Herzog Technologies; and Steve Vant, signal engineer at Conrail.

According to Nick Little, director of railway education at Michigan State University’s Center for Railway Research and Education, who helped select this year’s winners, all the honorees “demonstrated great leadership and people skills as well as industry and specialist subject knowledge.”

In addition, Railway Age listed those receiving honorable mentions, several of whom work at ASLRRRA member companies, including ASLRRRA’s new general counsel, Sarah Yurasko. Congratulations also to Tomeka Watson Bryant of New Orleans Public Belt Railroad Corporation, Sabri Cakdi of Holland LP, Kevin W. Christy of Conrail, Craig Denny of Pacific Harbor Line, Kellen Desmond of A&K Railroad

**Membership Dues Invoices Recently Sent Via Email, Please Note ASLRRA Address Change from Last Year**

ASLRRA membership dues invoices for 2020 were emailed last week to the billing contact on each member’s account. Please reach out to ASLRRA offices on (202) 628-4500 or aslrra@aslrra.org if your company did not receive an invoice.

Dues payments can be made via credit card, wire transfer or check. Please note that ASLRRA’s offices have moved since last year’s annual renewal, so make sure checks are directed to 50 F Street, NW, Suite 500, Washington, D.C. 20001.

We appreciate all of our members and are only able to accomplish our work on behalf of the short line industry with your continuing loyal support. Thank you.

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**Association Submits Comments for National Freight Strategic Plan**

The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) issued a request for information to help develop a National Freight Strategic Plan (NFSP) focusing on multimodal freight transportation. In response, ASLRRA filed comments on Feb. 10 addressing six of the 10 questions asked by the DOT.

ASLRRA focused on the questions considered most relevant to member operations. The comments identified three challenges facing the short line and regional rail industry: regulatory burden, safety, and modal equity. In addition, the document discussed technology, grant and loan programs, infrastructure and a federal disaster aid program for Class II and III railroads.

The NFSP was mandated by the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, and required by statute to address eleven specific components. All members of the public, including stakeholders, were invited to submit comments.
Railroad Retirement Board Offers Easier Access to Certain Information Through Website, Phone

The Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) offers a number of self-serve options for those seeking certain information or requesting certain documents, which can help reduce time spent waiting to speak to an employee personally. Online and telephone options are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

By accessing the myRRB website or using the automated menus when calling the RRB’s toll-free number (877-772-5772), customers can request a service and compensation statement, duplicate tax statement, replacement Medicare card and more.

Railroad employees who have accounts on the myRRB website can also claim certain benefits, check the status of benefit claims and view railroad service and compensation history.

FRA Report Presents Fatal Trespasser Strike Data from 2012 through 2017

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) recently released a new report summarizing railroad trespasser strike data from 2012 through 2017. The report includes intentional (suicide) and accidental or inconclusive (non-suicide) fatalities on rights-of-way (ROWs).

According to the report, California, New York, Florida and Texas consistently had the highest number of fatal trespasser strikes, regardless of intent. In addition to location of the incidents, collected data also included the season and time of day the strike took place, the age of the individual, the action of the individual at the time of the strike and the type of train involved.

The FRA hopes to use the report to help railroads identify populations and locations most at risk of trespasser strikes, and better design and implement countermeasures to prevent such tragedies. To help further address the issue of trespasser casualties, the FRA will hold six two-day Railroad Trespass Prevention and Grade Crossing Technology Summits, which is described in further detail in our Industry Events section below.

It’s Not Too Late to Register for Railroad Day on Capitol Hill

Do not miss the opportunity to join your industry colleagues to make our voices and our priorities heard on Capitol Hill! Register now! Room block will be closing this week.

Railroad Day is scheduled for March 4. The day begins at 7:30 in the morning and participants are encouraged to stay for the evening.
OneRail’s Proposal Outlines Surface Transportation Authorization Ideas

The OneRail Coalition identified the organization’s priorities for Surface Transportation Authorization in a policy proposal released on Feb. 6. Congress is working on legislation to reauthorize infrastructure funding programs, as the current Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act is set to expire on Sept. 30.

The OneRail proposal focuses on modal equity, safety, job growth, financing tools, project delivery and permitting, and research and technology. OneRail also identified specific funding programs and recommended a specific amount of money per year Congress should authorize for each.

ASLRRA is a member of OneRail, which includes a number of other rail stakeholders. The organization’s goal is to “educate America about the benefits of a strong freight and passenger rail system.”
Complete All FRA Reports to be Eligible for ASLRRA Jake Awards

Without completing the required Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) accident/incident reports for every month of 2019, even railroads and switching companies with the most stellar safety record will not be eligible to win an ASLRRA Jake Award or Jake Award with Distinction for safe operations.

ASLRRA will announce 2019 Jake Award winners at this year’s Connections convention May 2-5 in Grapevine, Texas. To ensure Jake Awards are given in a timely and fair manner, any reports submitted after Feb. 29 will not be considered. For more information, please see the FRA’s guidance on accident/incident reporting or contact Fred Oelsner at foelsner@aslrra.org.

Donate to ASLRRA’s Silent Auction and Help Support the Short Line Education Fund

ASLRRA’s annual Connections convention would not be complete without our silent auction, and that auction would not be complete without generous prize donations from our members.

Proceeds from the auction go to the Short Line Education Fund, which supports a range of high priority industry education, communications and research initiatives. Last year’s auction raised over $25,000. All donations are welcome, and because the Short Line Education Fund is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization, donations are tax-deductible.

To donate, simply complete the 2020 Auction Donation Form. Industry equipment, products and services are particularly desirable. Additional suggested donations include vacation home stays, hotel accommodations, airfare vouchers, electronics, jewelry, luxury and designer goods, gift cards, event tickets, and all things train related. For more information or to discuss a donation, please contact Sabrina Waiss at swaiss@aslrra.org.

Become a Sponsor at this Year’s ASLRRA Connections Convention

ASLRRA Connections offers a wide range of sponsorship opportunities to fit nearly every budget. A sponsorship investment is a prime way to promote your company, reinforce your brand, build your presence and raise your industry profile at the only convention dedicated to the short line and regional railroad industry.

Your company’s name and/or logo will appear in our meeting promotions before, during and after the convention and will be included in high-profile signage during the meetings and in the Expo Hall. At the event, individuals from sponsoring companies will be recognized with a “Sponsor” ribbon to display proudly on their badges. A sponsorship commitment guarantees valuable exposure before approximately 1800 attendees and is an investment that will pay dividends long after the trade show ends. Please contact Kathy Keeney on (202) 585-3439 for more information.

Advertising in the official convention program is another prime opportunity to get your company’s name and message in front of short line decision makers. Ad pricing starts at under $1,000 for the color, glossy program, which is distributed to all attendees. Please contact Danialle Richards on (202) 585-3443 for details.
ASLRRA Out and About

Safety and Training Committee Meets in California to Discuss Regulatory Issues

ASLRRA’s Safety and Training Committee met in San Pedro, Calif. to discuss current regulatory matters including Part 213 - Track Safety Standards, Part 225 - Accident/Incident Reporting, Part 232 - Brake System Safety Standards and Part 243 - Training Standards. ASLRRA’s Jo Strang, Sarah Yurasko and JR Gelnar represented the Association at the meeting.

Further discussions concerned ASLRRA’s annual Connections convention breakout sessions, educational offerings and committee activities. A tour of the railroad was provided on PHL’s newly purchased business cars. ASLRRA and the committee would like to thank member Pacific Harbor Line (PHL), especially PHL President Otis Cliatt and Anacostia Rail Holdings Company’s Chief Safety and Compliance Officer Tom Leopold, for hosting the meeting.

ASLRRA Webinars

Access ASLRRA’s On-Demand Webinars and Learn Whenever, Wherever

ASLRRA’s On-Demand Webinars cover a range of important topics presented by industry and subject matter experts, providing top-notch education with the ease of go-anywhere access.

Members can view these archived presentations for free, while non-members can [purchase a subscription](#) that offers unlimited access for a designated period of time. Browse ASLRRA’s most popular titles and see everything the Association has to offer through its [On-Demand Resource Library](#).

Upcoming Webinars

**Recruiting and Retaining Veterans and Transitioning Military** - Feb. 18, 2020

SPRING President Michele Malski and FASTPORT Executive Director of Military Engagement and Apprenticeships Dave Harrison will explain the benefits of establishing a federally registered apprenticeship program and how to start one.

**FRA Penalties and Violations** - Feb. 19, 2020

ASLRRA’s Senior Vice President of Safety and Regulatory Policy Jo Strang, along with Vice President of Safety and Compliance JR Gelnar, will discuss options available to short lines concerning how to prepare for and interact with inspectors during an audit, and available options when a violation has been received. Most short lines are considered a small business, requiring special actions from the FRA.

**Emergency Docket Waivers** - March 11, 2020

The FRA administrator can activate an emergency relief docket if extreme conditions constitute an emergency event to railroad operations. This webinar will explain emergency dockets and provide instruction on how to file a waiver petition for temporary relief from certain safety regulations. ASLRRA’s Senior Vice President of Safety and Regulatory Policy Jo Strang and Vice President of Safety and Compliance JR Gelnar will conduct the webinar.
Industry Events

Attend Free Leadership Development Training Offered by the Short Line Safety Institute

The Short Line Safety Institute (SLSI) is now offering leadership development training at no cost to short line railroads. The interactive program was designed based on data from completed railroad safety culture assessments identifying leadership development as a key way to improve overall safety culture.

The next training session will be held March 10-12 at the David N. McDonald Training Center, located at the Port Bienville Industrial Park in Mississippi. Several spaces are still available for interested participants. Contact SLSI Director of Safety Culture Programs Sam Cotton at Sam.Cotton@shortlinesafety.org for more information or sign up here.

Leadership development training is also scheduled to take place April 21-23 at Buckingham Branch Railroad in Virginia, May 12-14 at Jeff-Clark Preservation Station in Indiana, and June 9-11 in Westfield, Massachusetts.

FRA to Hold Free Summit in Four States to Help Reduce Rail Trespassing Incidents and Increase Awareness

In order to raise awareness of the dangers of trespassing on railroads and discuss ideas for solutions for trespassing issues and improvements at grade crossings, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) will hold six two-day Railroad Trespass Prevention and Grade Crossing Technology Summits.

The free events will take place in Texas, Illinois, Florida and California in April, May and June. The first day of each summit will focus on reducing the number of railroad trespassing incidents, while the second will discuss ideas for technological improvements at grade crossings.

Follow the link above for more information, including specific dates for each meeting, a detailed agenda and an online registration form.

Click here for a listing of industry events.

Views & News is published by American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association. Please contact Amy Krouse, editor, with questions or comments.